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by John Krafty (Product Manager, Books In Print®, R. R. Bowker)
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R. R. Bowker has been the U.S. ISBN Agency since 1968 and the Australian ISBN Agency (through its Thorpe-Bowker division) since 2002. An ISBN Agency is responsible for the overall administration of the ISBN system within its registration group. These responsibilities are:

- to issue notification of the assignment of an ISBN
- to create and maintain registers of ISBNs and ISBN metadata
- to make ISBN and associated metadata available to other registration agencies and to users of the ISBN system
- to promote, educate, and train others in the use of the ISBN

As a member of the International ISBN Agency, Bowker has been involved in discussions about ISBN-13 since the late 1990's. The first official planning session on expanding the ISBN took place in mid 2000, and continued until the final draft was approved in the spring of 2004.

Bowker-specific preparations began in early 2004. Obviously, this involved technical changes to the many internal and external systems, but also involved the education of publishers in the U.S. and Australia as part of its ISBN Agency responsibilities.


Of all the questions the ISBN Agency receives about the ISBN-13, these two are the most common:


A: No. As described elsewhere in this issue, the ISBN-13 will not only have the 978 prefix preceding the ISBN, but the check digit of the ISBN-10 will be dropped and a new algorithm will be applied to calculate a new check digit.

Q: Will I be assigned the same publisher prefixes for ISBN-13 as I have for ISBN-10?

A: No. Regional ISBN Agencies (like Bowker) receive their ISBN publisher prefix allocation ranges from the international ISBN Agency. There is no way to predict that the agencies will receive the same prefix range allocations as in the past.

In April 2005, subscribers to Bowker's online (BIP) products will see the ISBN-13 on search results and full display pages. These products will also support searches using either the ISBN-10 or -13. Also at this time, Bowker will offer ISBN-13 conversion services for booksellers and libraries.

The good news is that the EAN/UCC has committed to providing future three digit prefixes for the ISBN, so there is no immediate threat of running out, at least not in our lifetime.

people profile

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BORN & LIVED: Born, raised and still live in Bethlehem, PA.
EARLY LIFE: Catholic grade school — need I say more?
FAMILY: Lives with Jim, his partner of 14 years.
FIRST JOB: Newspaper delivery.
IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Listen to music, read non-fiction, garden, run, bicycle or just enjoy the outdoors!
PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Self-centered people.
PHILOSOPHY: You only live once, so you might as well enjoy yourself!
HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Access to on-demand, pay-as-you-go book content (similar to music and iTunes).


by David Buckbaum (Automated Operations Coordinator, CIP Division, Library of Congress) <dabu@loc.gov>

December 2003

The Cataloging in Publication Division at the Library of Congress received a query from a major publishing house requesting permission to add ISBNs in the new 13-digit format to the Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) data. While informal discussions continued on page 22
Implementing our readiness to implement ISBN-13 were under way, specifically with regard to the impact on our bibliographic systems and applications, we believed there would be sufficient time to make any necessary changes well in advance of the published date for full implementation (1/1/2007). Moreover, the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) working group charged with drafting the revised standard (ISO 2108) was not due to publish the final specifications until January 2005. However, in response to the publishers who wanted to implement ISBN-13 as early as 2003, and to preserve the integrity of our bibliographic data, we were compelled to respond quickly by drafting a comprehensive policy statement and developing a strategy to integrate the new format into our existing bibliographic systems and data.

January 2004

At ALA Midwinter, in San Diego, stakeholders from various divisions of the Library of Congress elected to pursue fact-finding activities, both informally and formally through their respective committees, prior to meeting as a group to formulate a strategic plan for implementation of ISBN-13. In addition, there was a NISO-sponsored conference meeting (“Size matters: Preparing for the Expanded ISBN”) scheduled to take place on Monday, January 12, 2004. From these sources, we expected to glean information on issues of importance for publishers, libraries, and bibliographic data systems.

Meanwhile, we gathered additional information on two fronts regarding:

1. Revisions that would need to be made to our bibliographic systems and software in order to provide publishers the capability to submit 13-digit ISBNs to the Library of Congress via the Cataloging-in-Publication program and the Pre-assigned Control Number (PCN) program (which assigns LCCNs) and how long these changes would take to implement.

After bibliographic systems and software experts studied the issue, it was determined that several applications would indeed need to be revised, including software to produce MARC21 records from application data in the Electronic CIP and Electronic PCN systems, CIP data generator applications (i.e., to provide publishers with CIP data), and MARC21 record validation programs. However, the experts stated that the updates could be completed in a relatively short time.

2. The readiness of publishers to supply pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs for forthcoming publications during the “interim” period from January 1, 2005 to January 1, 2007 (i.e., in advance of the full implementation date).

The Library of Congress representative to the BISAC Metadata Committee of the Book Industry Study Group was asked about the topic at their monthly meeting and reported to us that several publishers were intent on phasing in 13-digit ISBNs beginning in Spring 2004. In addition, the committee requested an adjustment to the format of Cataloging-in-Publication data to conform to the International ISBN Agency guidelines (http://www.isbn-international.org/en/revision.html), which mandate that, during the interim period, the 13-digit ISBN and its 10-digit counterpart be printed on separate lines by manifestation (e.g., “hardcover,” “paperback”), for example:

ISBN-13: 978-1-873671-00-0 (hardcover)
ISBN-10: 1-873671-00-8 (hardcover)

February 2004

Stakeholders from the Library of Congress’ Bibliographic Access Division, including CIP and the Cataloging Policy and Support Office (CP SO); ILS Program Office; and the Network Development/ MARC Standards Office met to discuss issues surrounding the proposed implementation of ISBN-13 in order to formulate a clear and timely response to our constituencies: the publishing and library communities. A consensus emerged: if publishers were ready to begin printing 13-digit ISBNs in forthcoming publications, the Library of Congress must be prepared to record the new number format as part of the descriptive cataloging process and incorporate it into the CIP data.

However, several technical questions remained to be addressed prior to implementation, including:

1. Could integrated library systems, including those used by the Library of Congress and bibliographic partner institutions (e.g., OCLC, RLG, the British Library, the Library and Archives of Canada), accommodate the 13-digit ISBN format?

The ILS Program Office and CP SO representatives held that the Library of Congress would have no problems accommodating 13-digit ISBNs, since the MARC21 020 field is of variable length and would be indexed as such.

Since we did not know whether or not the same would hold true for the diverse systems used by our partner institutions, we decided to survey each of them individually concerning the potential impact of 13-digit ISBNs on their software applications.

2. Would content designation in the MARC21 020 field need to be revised to accommodate linked pairs of ISBNs by manifestation as mandated by the IIA?

There was some discussion with regard to how the pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs would be described in the MARC21 bibliographic record. Some believed that the pairs should be entered into the same 020 field delimited by two “a” subfields. Unfortunately, this would have required a lengthy process to change the MARC21 020 content designation, since the “a” subfield is currently not repeatable. In addition, this would have entailed additional revisions to our software applications.

Consequently, we decided to record them in repeated 020 fields grouped by manifestation.

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<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
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3. Should Library of Congress CIP data be adapted to conform to the new ISBN format (i.e., pairs of ISBNs by manifestation) as mandated by the IIA guidelines?

There was strong disagreement on this issue. Some held the opinion that since CIP data had been based on the machine-readable card format for decades and, secondly, since it is indeed “virtual” metadata (i.e., printed in the book, but not part of the content), we should not alter the structure of ISBNs in CIP data to accommodate the IIA prescribed format for ISBN-13 and ISBN-10.

However, after considering the dilemma facing publishers having to print twice as many ISBNs in the book for each manifestation, we reached a compromise.

Interim Compromise

During the interim period from January 1, 2005 through January 1, 2007, pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs would appear in the prescribed format within the CIP data, but if a record contained more than two such pairs of ISBNs, only the first two pairs would appear in the data followed by “[etc.]”. This limitation was intended to address space considerations. But, beginning January 1, 2007, CIP data would revert to the traditional format, comprised of only 13-digit ISBNs.

4. When would the necessary revisions to the Library of Congress’ online systems and software applications be completed?

Bibliographic systems and software experts at LC reported that all necessary revisions to online systems and software applications could be completed by July 1, 2004. However, after a series of consultations, our bibliographic partner institutions and the BISAC Metadata Committee agreed to an official implementation date of October 1, 2004. This would allow our partner institutions to adequately prepare their bibliographic information systems for ISBN-13 implementation, and, at the same time, grant publishers sufficient time (i.e., prior to the start of the interim period) to submit CIP and PCN applications containing 13-digit ISBNs for forthcoming books to be published during the interim period. In addition, the ALA Annual Conference in Orlando (mid-June 2004) would provide further opportunity for the various stakeholders to converse with one another regarding any remaining implementation issues. For example, the CIP Division intended to discuss the proposed changes to the CIP data format at the meeting of the CIP Advisory Group.

May 2004

LC began distribution of the official Library of Congress policy statement for implementation of the 13-digit ISBN to constituent groups including publishers, librarians, and LC staff members. Among the intended audiences were: the BISAC Metadata Committee, Library of Congress MARC Distribution Services (MDS) subscribers, Program for Cooperative Cataloging institutions, and the National Library of Medicine (a CIP cooperative cataloging institution). The ISBN-13 policy statement was made available online on the CPSO and CIP/PCN Websites, and summarized in a Library of Congress Cataloging Newsline article.

Library of Congress staff, including catalogers, technicians, and CIP publisher liaisons also received a revised Library of Congress Rule Interpretation (LCRI 1.8), which provides detailed instructions on the new ISBN-13 format and how to record the numbers in the MARC21 record.

October 2004

With all systems and software application updates in place well in advance of the implementation date, the Library of Congress began accepting 13-digit ISBNs. The only issue that has arisen since that time is the question of unpaired 13-digit ISBNs (i.e., without a corresponding 10-digit number). Although Library of Congress catalogers were instructed not to include single 13-digit ISBNs in the bibliographic record, upon further reflection, we decided that a rare occurrence of an unpaired ISBN-13 would still provide valid descriptive information and aid the user in searching for a particular title.

February 2005

During the last four months, more than 500 bibliographic records containing pairs of 13- and 10-digit ISBNs have been created and distributed; the vast majority of them were products of our Electronic CIP program (http://cip.loc.gov/). We anticipate that these numbers will increase dramatically during the next year, particularly as more and more publishers begin to supply 13-digit ISBNs for forthcoming publications via the CIP and PCN programs.


ISBN-13: A Publisher’s Checklist

by Greg Giblin (Director of Market Development, STM Division, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.) <ggiblin@wiley.com>

Implementation of ISBN-13 represents a unique challenge to publishers. By January 1, 2007 all publishers must be fully compliant with the new ISBN-13 standard. Systems must be able to work with the new standard and be interoperable internally as well as with trading partners and customers. The purpose of this article is to remind fellow publishers that major changes are afoot and to present some of the key issues involved in making a smooth transition into the new ISBN-13 environment.

Involve All Stakeholders

To publishers, the conversion to ISBN-13 has an impact on the organization that is comparable to that of Y2K in the late 90s. Or for the less dramatic, the addition of a three digit area code to formerly seven digit phone numbers. In order to address the multifaceted aspects of this new standard, publishers need to develop a coordinated global effort that includes compliance and participation of all its respective publishing centers across North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Additionally, publishers often have several publishing groups or divisions within their larger organization, such as Trade/Consumer, Professional, Scientific, Technical and Medical, and Higher Education divisions. Cross-divisional collaboration is critical because workflows, reporting systems, distribution channels and trading partners all vary due to the nature of these respective businesses.

As well, representation is needed from all operational and support areas such as IT, distribution, production, and finance. These groups will be heavily involved in many aspects and phases of the new system’s implementation.

Implement in Phases

In order to successfully migrate to the new standard, publishers need to create a timeline for implementation that addresses all relevant internal and external dependencies. Because the ISBN drives so many of our systems, pub